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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DATE: 31 MAY 2006
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Missed the May 15th Medicare Prescription Drug Program Deadline? What to do now.

Now that the initial enrollment period for Medicare Part D has come and gone, the time frame for you to enroll in a Part D plan is the same as the time frame you have to enroll in Medicare Part B. You may enroll at any time from three months before until three months after the month in which you first meet the eligibility requirements. People who are new to Medicare should be researching Part D options and may enroll in plans throughout the rest of the year.

If you had Medicare as of January 2006, then Monday, May 15, 2006 was the deadline for you to enroll into a Medicare stand-alone prescription drug plan (PDP) or Medicare Advantage Plan with prescription drug coverage (MA-PD). If your Medicare began in February, then your deadline to enroll in a Medicare Part D drug plan is Wednesday, May 31, 2006. If your Medicare began in March 2006, then your deadline to enroll is June 30. If your Medicare began April 2006, then your deadline to enroll is July 31, and so forth.

Disabled individuals who receive a notice that they have been granted retroactive Medicare eligibility have from the date of that notice until three months after the date of the notice to enroll in a Medicare Part D plan.

If you have creditable drug coverage (drug benefits that are "as good as or better" than Medicare Part D) from a private insurance plan, you do not have to enroll in a Part D plan in order to avoid a late enrollment penalty on your Part D premiums. Wisconsin's Senior Care is considered creditable coverage. Most employer plans are considered creditable coverage. Check with your employee benefits department and ask for a copy of the notice of creditable coverage that employers are required to give to employees and retirees on employer group plans.

Generally, if you are 65 or older, you can still enroll in SeniorCare. To apply for SeniorCare, you must be a Wisconsin resident, 65 years of age or older, and must pay a \$30 per person annual enrollment fee. A husband and wife would each pay \$30, for a total of \$60. To obtain an application for SeniorCare, please call the Medigap Helpline at 1-800-242-1060 or call SeniorCare at 1-800-657-2038. You can also go online to the SeniorCare website at <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/SeniorCare/>, print an application, complete it, and send it in with the required fee.

If you missed the Part D deadline, and you had Medicare on or before January 1, 2006, please call the Wisconsin Prescription Drug Helpline at 1-866-456-8211 to discuss your options. If you are under age 60 and on Medicare, please call the Disability Drug Benefit Helpline at 1-800-926-4862.

By: Donna Bryant